

Bad Axe Public Schools is honored to recognize the following individuals who have received the Bad Axe Distinguished Alumni Award.

CLASS OF 2019

Janice Holz graduated in 1960 and went on to attend CMU earning a Bachelor's of Science degree. For twenty-five years, she worked as a Family Independence Specialist for the State of Michigan. Throughout her career, Holz has spent a lifetime serving the Bad Axe community and beyond. Currently she is the President of the HISD Board, secretary of the Thumb Industries Board, and director on the SET/SEG School Insurance Board. She served on the Bad Axe Board of Education for twenty-five years. She is on the Michigan Association of School Boards and serves as the director of Region 5 that includes the Thumb area. Her love of public education continues through serving on the National Labor Relations Board and receiving the Master Diamond Award and President's Award. She is also an active member of Sacred Heart Church. Holz was married to the late Gerald Holz and has three daughters and five grandchildren.

Richard Etzler, Class of 1983, went on to attend Michigan State University earning a Bachelor of Arts in Accounting and worked for Arthur Anderson and Company in Detroit. Etzler became a certified Public Accountant and began working for the Ford Motor Company. In 1990, he became a special agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. During his time working in the FBI, he was a member of the Violent Crime squad, White Collar Crime Squad and Drug and Organized Crime squad where he received several FBI awards and accolades. He was promoted to be Supervisory Special Agent in Washington, D.C. where he worked in the Public Corruption and Government Fraud Unit and later became Supervisory Senior Resident Agent of the FBI office in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Etzler was then assigned to the United States Embassy in the Bahamas before transferring to the Miami Division/West Palm Beach field office. During his twenty-five year career with the FBI, he has been part of a number of well-known cases such as Whitewater, Oklahoma City bombing, and the 9/11 Attack on the Pentagon. His career took him to multiple countries on three continents, met two US Presidents, two Prime Ministers, and a number of Ambassadors.

CLASS OF 2018

Dr. Clark Herrington graduated in 1944 and enlisted in the United States Army where he was a member of the Army band until 1946. He graduated from the University of Michigan in 1950 and Wayne State University School of Medicine in 1954. In 1959, Herrington returned to his hometown of Bad Axe with his wife, Jeannette, and their family and established the first surgical practice in the Thumb. He was instrumental in bringing about the construction of Huron Memorial Hospital in 1970 where he served as Chief of Staff for many years. Dr. Herrington was the first Fellow of the American College of Surgeons in the Thumb Area. He helped to establish a summer program for medical students. He was a member of the Huron County Medical Society and the Midwest Surgical Association serving as President. After retirement, Herrington served on the Bad Axe City Council and was an instructor for the St. Clair Community College nursing program held at the Huron Tech Center. He passed away in 2008, but his legacy continues in his children- Susan, Kate, Charley, David, Mimi, Dorothy, and Margaret.

Leland "Jack" Rochefort graduated from Bad Axe High School in 1951. After graduation, he served in the United States Navy before returning home to begin working at a local tool and die maker, Mozik Tool. In 1972, Mr. Rochefort started Thumb Tool and Engineering in Bad Axe producing dies. Thumb Tool and

Engineering grew to become the second largest die maker in the United States. In 2017, over 200 people were employed at Thumb Tool with 57 of them being employed for over 30 years. In 1996, Rochefort merged Thumb Tool into the Gemini Group which employs over 1200 members of the community. Mr. Rochefort was a founding shareholder of Northstar Bank in 2001. Over the years, Rochefort has supported a number of community programs including Bad Axe Schools, Little League Baseball and Softball, Teen Challenge, and other charitable giving. Rochefort resides in Bad Axe with his wife, Harriett. He is the father of four children- Cindy, Jerry, Lori, and Jeff with his late wife, Jean, and has 13 grandchildren.

CLASS OF 2017

Richard Lee, Class of 1957, served in the US Marines earning the rank of sergeant. Lee then attended Alma College where he was a dual sport athlete playing football and baseball. He later earned a Master's Degree from the University of Michigan. Richard spent over 35 years at Carman Ainsworth Schools as an English, Drama, and Drivers Education teacher. Mr. Lee has served as a High School Broadcaster for 35 years and the Alma College Football PA announcer for 21 years. In 2011, Mr. Lee entered the Alma College Athletic Hall of Fame. His love of theater also included being the State Director for the Michigan Thespian Society for 10 years and on the Board of Directors of the International Thespian Society, and 24 years as a member of the Young People's Ballet Theatre Company. Along with legendary Bad Axe football coach Claude Marsh, Lee co-authored the book, "The Golden Greek." Lee currently resides in Flint, MI.

William (Bill) Tageson, Class of 1960, attended the University of Michigan where he played football under Coach Bump Elliott and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Education with a Biology minor. Tageson was commissioned in the Navy as Ensign following graduation from Officer's Candidate School. He had two tours and 4 ship deployments to Vietnam as a salvage and diving officer advisor. He spent time as a training program coordinator for all US Navy diving schools, Chief Engineer on a Navy destroyer, and as the US Navy Supervisor of Salvage working commercial salvage ops around the world. Tageson has since been a Navy contractor worldwide for oil spill response training for 24 years and certified an estimated 20,000 Navy and Marine members and civilians. He has also served as a commercial spill management team expert for several response organizations to large and small oil spills. Tageson currently resides in Benicia, CA.

CLASS OF 2016

Mrs. Cheryl (Rivard) Rice graduated from Bad Axe High School in 1974. She went on attend Michigan State University and later the Hurley Medical Center School of Nursing in 1978. Rice has served her patients for 37 years as a Registered Nurse for Huron Medical Center. She has worked in a variety of positions at Huron Medical Center including 28 of those years in the Oncology/Infusion Center. She has been named Nurse of the Year on three separate occasions.

Mr. Donald Clark graduated from Bad Axe in 1963. He attended the University of Detroit where he earned his B.A. in 1967 and the University of Michigan where he earned in Juris Doctorate in law in 1972. Mr. Clark was a member of the U.S. Army from 1969-1970 where he served during Vietnam earning the Bronze Star of Merit. Clark has practiced law in Huron County for 38 years and is a member of the Michigan Law Review Editorial Staff and Huron County Bar Association. He is a long time member of the Bad Axe Lions Club, Huron Medical Center Board, Care & Share program, and a founding member of the Bad Axe

Christmas Parade committee. Clark has also assisted for over 20 years with the track and theater programs through Bad Axe Schools.

CLASS OF 2015

George Haley graduated from Bad Axe High School in 1966. He went on to attend the University of Michigan earning a Bachelor of Science in Engineering in 1970 and a Master's of Science in 1971 from the University of California-Berkeley. Mr. Haley continued his studies by earning a Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School in 1974. Mr. Haley is a partner with the international law firm, Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP, where he is a leader of the firm's Energy and Infrastructure Practice team. He has been listed in Who's Who in America and in the International Who's Who. In 2015, he was named to the Best Lawyers in America list. Mr. Haley has been a faculty member of the University of Shanghai's International Business Institute in Shanghai, China and has served as a board member of the California Shakespeare Festival and the National Writing Project. In 2010, Mr. Haley was named Distinguished Alumni from the University of Michigan. He has also in recent years endowed a scholarship through the University of Michigan Engineering College giving preferences to students from Bad Axe High School and Huron County. He currently resides in California with his wife, Theresa Thomas.

Dr. E. Lea Schelke graduated from Bad Axe High School in 1958. She went on to attend Central Michigan University earning a Bachelors in Education in 1962. She then earned a Masters of Arts from Wayne State University in 1969 and later in 1976 earned a Doctorate from Wayne State University. Dr. Schelke was an English teacher with the Trenton Public Schools where she retired in 2002 after 40 years of service. In 1989, she was named runner up as Michigan Secondary Teacher of the Year for the state of Michigan. She has served as the National Education Association State Director of Michigan and been the Chairperson of the Professional Standards and Practices Committee for Michigan. She has been a member of the Kellogg Foundation of Michigan Middle Start Advisory and the K-12 National Education Research Policies and Priorities Board for the US Department of Education. Ms. Schelke was one of two Michigan teachers to be invited to attend the inauguration of President George H.W. Bush. She has been a guide for the Detroit Institute of Art helping direct and organize presentations. Dr. Schelke currently resides in the metro Detroit area.

Mr. James Volk graduated from Bad Axe High School in 1957. He went on to attend Ferris Institute which is now known as Ferris State University earning a Bachelor's of Science in Pharmaceuticals. Mr. Volk was the co-owner of Higby's Pharmacy for nearly 40 years. He served as an intern proctor for Ferris State and the University of Michigan Pharmacy Schools. He also co-owned the JCPenneys Catalog Store and Karen and Katie's Hallmark Store in Bad Axe. He has been a Councilman for the city of Bad Axe, including Chairman of the Bad Axe Charter Commission, and served on the planning commission and zoning board of appeals. He also has been a member of the Downtown Development Committee, Parish Council member of Sacred Heart Church, and the Bad Axe Rotary including the role of president and a Paul Harris Fellow Award. He has spent many decades working to help eradicate polio within Huron County and throughout the world serving as the chairman in Huron County in 1964. Mr. Volk was a charter member of the Bad Axe Athletic Boosters that helps to support the various athletic programs within the school. Mr. Volk currently resides in Bad Axe with his wife Helen.

CLASS OF 2014

Stephen Moore graduated from Bad Axe in 1979. Mr. Moore earned a B.A. from Albion College and a Juris Doctor from the Detroit College of Law. Mr. Moore is a special agent with the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division. He has investigation expertise in organized crime, asset forfeiture, money laundering, health-care fraud, undercover operations, and international financial crimes. Other accomplishments include being the Michigan Coordinator for Project Outreach which works to educate middle and high school students on the dangers of drugs and the Adrian Project which is an interactive financial workshop for college students around the country. Mr. Moore worked with the MACPA Anti-Fraud Task Force earning the MACPA Chair's Service Award. He also has served as the Detroit's Field Office's Public Information Officer which is a liaison for IRS criminal investigations, government agencies, and media. In 2005, Mr. Moore was recognized by the IRS as the Mid-Atlantic Area Special Agent of the Year. Mr. Moore also received the Internal Revenue Service National Special Agent of the Year in 2006. He continues to help organize a golf outing for the Steven Kuzek Memorial Golf Scholarship which sponsors college bound students from Huron and Tuscola Counties. Mr. Moore currently resides in the Metro Detroit area.

Thomas Otterbein graduated in 1966. After high school, Mr. Otterbein attended the US Naval Academy and US Naval Postgraduate School. He had a distinguished career in the US Navy from 1966-2000. Among his many accomplishments, Otterbein attended Navy Flight Training in 1971. He flew for 18 years logging over 4,100 flight hours and 750 carrier-arrested landings on the A-4, F-4, F-5, F-14, and F-18 tactical aircrafts. He was deployed on the USS Franklin D. Roosevelt, USS Kitty Hawk, USS Carl Vinson, USS Midway, USS Theodore Roosevelt, and USS Harry S. Truman. Otterbein was the XO/CO of Strike Fighter Squadron 195 aboard the USS Midway. He was also the Executive Officer on the USS Theodore Roosevelt from 1991-1993 and the Commanding Officer on the USS Nashville from 1993-1995. Otterbein was the Executive Officer and Acting Commanding Officer of the US Navy Fighter Weapons School otherwise known as Top Gun. He was involved in the development of the script for the major motion picture Top Gun. Otterbein was the first Commanding Officer of the USS Harry S. Truman from 1996-1999. Upon his retirement from the Navy, Otterbein was recognized for his service in the U.S. House of Representatives. After retirement, Mr. Otterbein worked ten years for Sperry Marine Corporation and Northrop Grumman Corporation providing navigation equipment and software for military and commercial use. Otterbein currently resides in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Mr. John Rowland graduated from Bad Axe in 1956. After his graduation from Bad Axe, Mr. Rowland entered the US Marine Corp where he served from 1957-1961. He then went on to earn a B.A. in Education from Alma College in 1962 where he also was a starting center for the Alma College football team from 1959-1961. Later, Rowland earned a M.A. from Eastern Michigan University in 1968. Mr. Rowland began his education career in Chesaning before coming home to Bad Axe as a teacher in 1964. In 1966, Mr. Rowland began his tenure as an administrator serving in numerous roles including Superintendent, athletic director, assistant High School Principal, and Junior High Principal. Rowland was involved in numerous extracurricular activities including head football coach, assistant football coach, assistant basketball coach, 4-6 grade basketball, and Babe Ruth baseball coach. He was a member of the Bad Axe Chamber of Commerce, President of the Thumb B Athletic Association, and on the committee that established girls' athletics in the Thumb of Michigan. Rowland was instrumental in starting the annual 8th grade trip that students continue to enjoy today. He established a scholarship in memory of his late wife, Linda, which is given annually to a graduating senior. In 2013, the Bad Axe School's performance arts center was named the Linda and John Rowland Performance Arts Center. Mr. Rowland continues to reside in Bad Axe, Michigan.